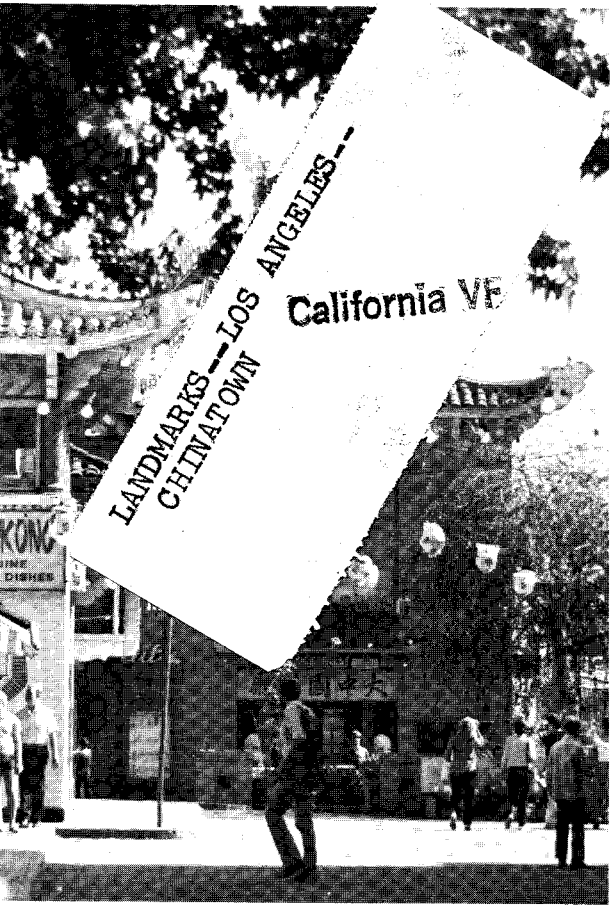


# LOS ANGELES CHINATOWN WALKING TOUR (Yesterday & Today)



**Chinese Historical Society  
of Southern California**



# Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

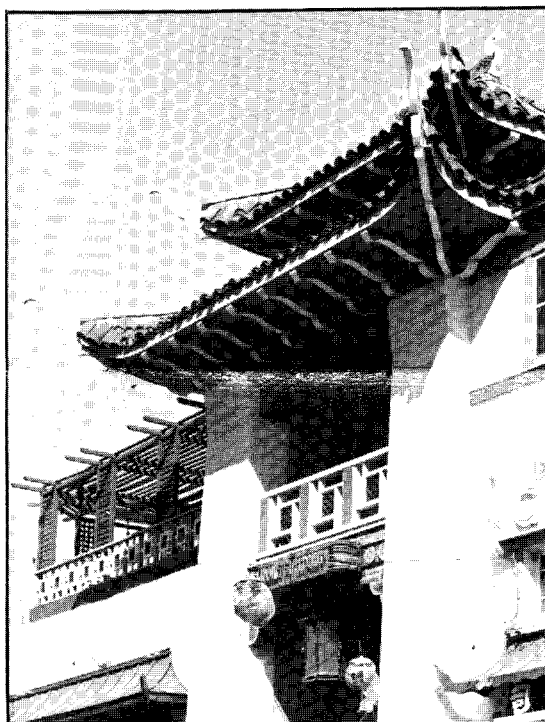


Garnier Building in Old Chinatown, 1942

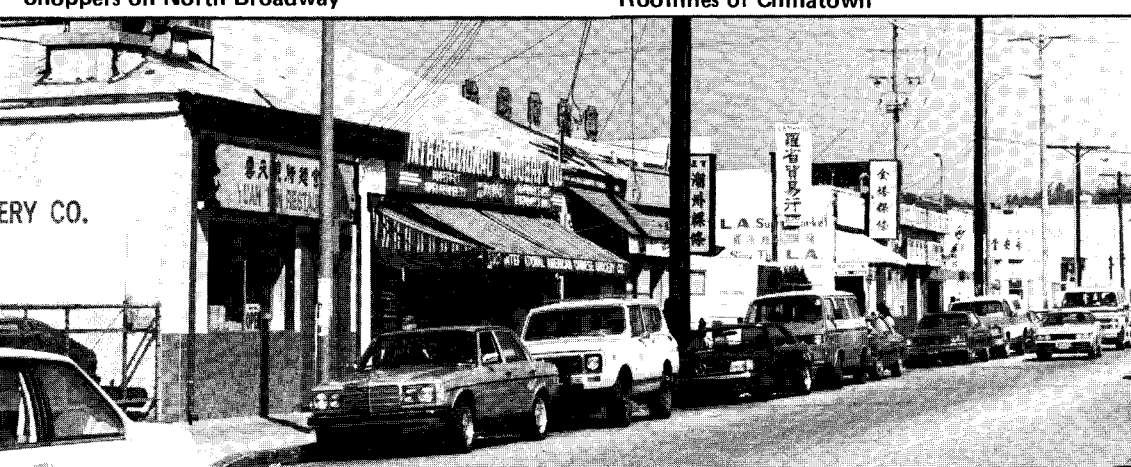
*Courtesy Huntington Library*



Shoppers on North Broadway



Rooflines of Chinatown



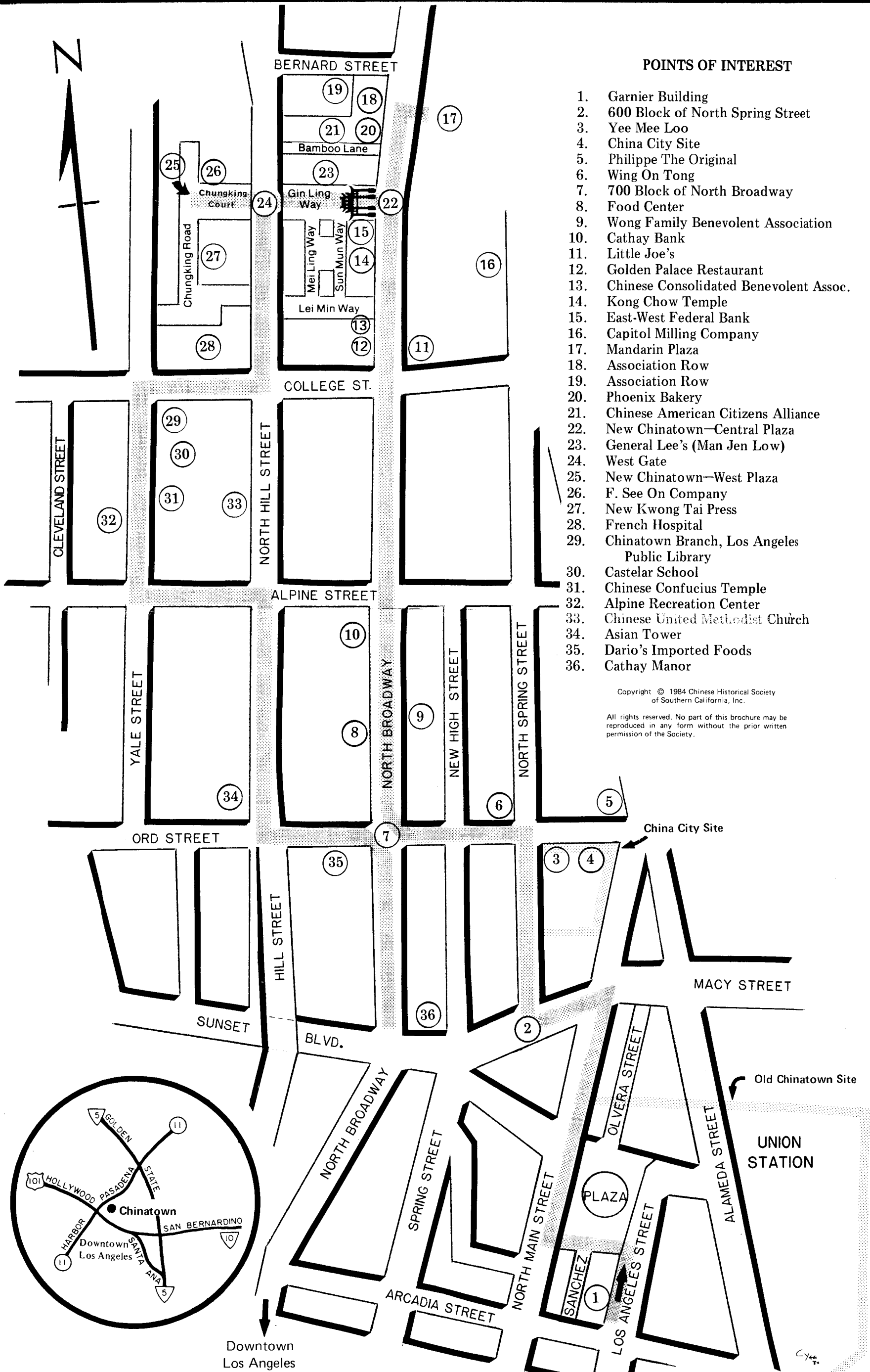
600 Block of North Spring Street

The Murals at Golden Palace (below)



# LOS ANGELES CHINATOWN

## WALKING TOUR





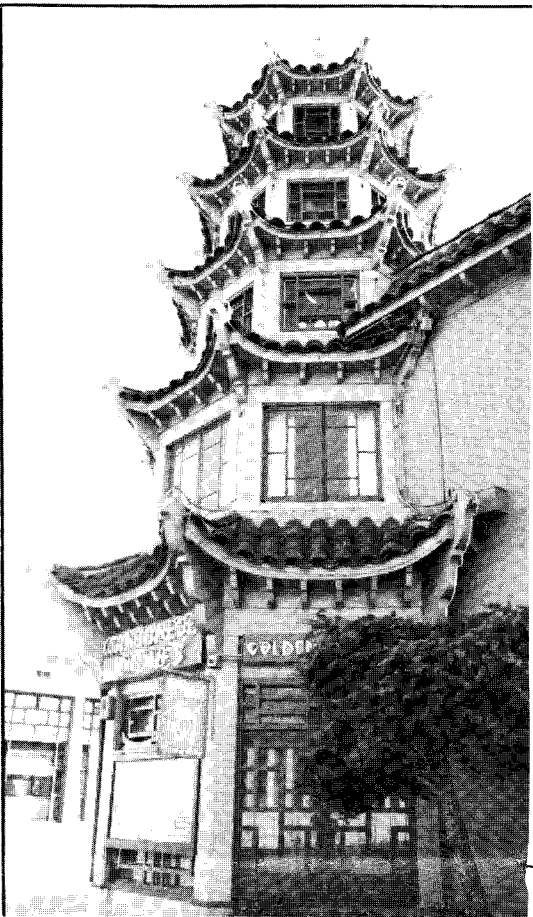


New Chinatown East Gate

Photography: Munson Kwok



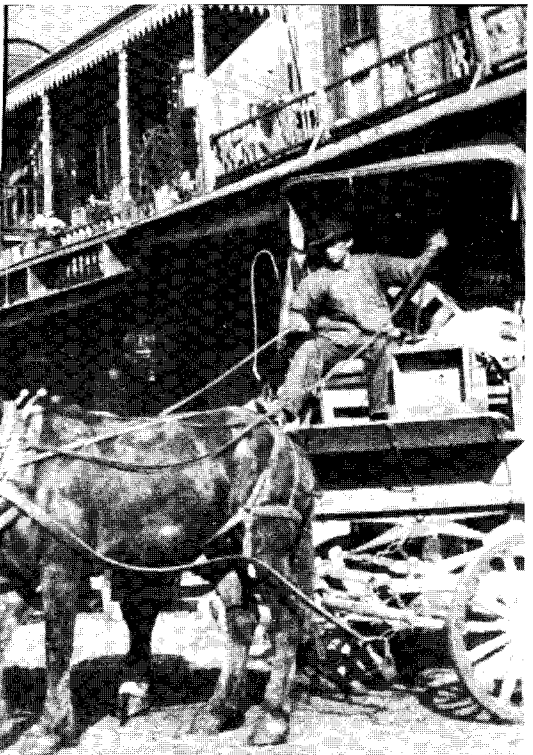
News Vendor on North Broadway



Golden Pagoda (Central Plaza)



Shoppers on Gin Ling Way



Scene in Old Chinatown—circa 1900

Mandarin Plaza Entrance (below)



## LOS ANGELES CHINATOWN WALKING TOUR

*Los Angeles Chinatown is one of the great urban communities that make up the rich fabric of metropolitan Los Angeles. This brochure provides a self-guided tour that explores the history and sights of this community, now more than a century old. The full tour covers about two miles and should take about two hours. It has been designed so that one can pick up the tour at any point along the route. However, to gain the proper historical perspective, it is recommended that the tour begin at the Garnier Building.*

### A BIT OF HISTORY

In 1850, sixty-nine years after the founding of Los Angeles, the United States census recorded two Chinese male house servants, Ah Fou and Ah Luce, among the small Los Angeles population of 1,610. In the ensuing years, with the depletion of the gold fields, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and growing hostility against Chinese in other areas, more Chinese started to drift into isolated Los Angeles. By 1870, the Chinese population had grown to nearly 200. Most were restricted to settling in a rundown area just southeast of the Plaza—creating the first “Chinatown” in Los Angeles. It was in this area that violence erupted one October afternoon in 1871 in what has become known as the Chinese Massacre. Nineteen innocent Chinese men and boys were killed in a massive anti-Chinese race riot.

In spite of these and other hostilities, Chinese contributed greatly towards the early growth of Southern California. Chinese labor opened landlocked Los Angeles to the nation. A wagon road through the mountain passes near Newhall was built by Chinese. Thousands of Chinese dug the difficult San Fernando tunnel to bring the first outside railroad link, the Southern Pacific, into town in 1876. Other lines, also using Chinese labor, followed; the sleepy town of Los Angeles started to boom. The Chinese population, mostly made up of young single men, also grew as a result of migration from rural and mining areas.

Through the entire last half of the 19th century, Chinese had an important impact as a labor force. They were employed as cooks and servants, ranch hands and farm help. Small shops and most of the laundries were operated by Chinese. Chinese fishing camps were established up and down the coast and on the Channel Islands. Most importantly, a large number of independent Chinese farmers grew most of the vegetables consumed by Los Angeles residents. They sold their produce at the Plaza or peddled their products door-to-door. Their horse-drawn wagons and later their pickup trucks became a common sight in Los Angeles. For nearly 50 years, into the 1930's, the Chinese had a near monopoly on produce distribution in the city. They organized one of the earliest produce markets, the ongoing City Market at Ninth and San Pedro Streets.

Near the turn of the century and for the next several decades, the Chinese population in Los Angeles stabilized at around 2,000. Housing restrictions and local hostilities kept most of the Chinese within the Old Chinatown area, which now extended eastward across Alameda Street from the Plaza. Families began to grow as Chinese women arrived.

In the mid-1930's all of Old Chinatown east of Alameda Street was torn down to make way for Union Station. Many families moved southward towards the produce market area. Some of the Chinese businesses moved nearby to China City, a project within the city block north of Sunset Boulevard between Spring and Main Streets. Others who left Old Chinatown went to the 900 block of North Broadway and developed New Chinatown.

By 1950, the remaining Chinese had left the Plaza area to make way for freeway construction; the Plaza area became part of El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park.

Today Chinatown has grown far beyond the boundaries of the 1930's and 1940's. New shopping plazas have sprung up. Refugees and immigrants have joined the earlier settlers in the adjacent residential area. Chinatown today reflects a vigorous and growing community while it remains a major tourist attraction.

**1 GARNIER BUILDING**  
Corner of Los Angeles and Arcadia Streets

This two-story brick building was built by Philippe Garnier in 1890 specifically for Chinese commercial use and continued to be occupied by Chinese tenants until it was vacated around 1950 to make way for freeway construction; the south wing was subsequently demolished. The ground floor was originally used for retail businesses, and the second floor housed family associations and community organizations. Today the building is a part of El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park and will soon be renovated for commercial and museum uses.

From the front of the building, look east across Los Angeles Street to a parkway where Calle de los Negros (Negro Alley) was located. Dating back to the Spanish and Mexican periods, the street was named presumably because of the number of dark skin residents, either mestizo or mulatto, who lived in the adobe houses along its length. It was here where the early Los Angeles Chinese settled; by the 1870's most of the residents were Chinese. Later the Chinese settlement would expand eastward across Alameda Street down to the Los Angeles River.

While walking through the State Park, be sure to visit the Fire House, the Visitor's Center, and the Founder's Plaque in the Plaza. Also, take a walk down Sanchez Street; many of these buildings were occupied by Chinese at one time or another. They are the last visible structures of Old Chinatown.

**2 600 Block of North Spring Street**

This section of town was once called Sonora-town after the miners and families from the state of Sonora, Mexico, who once lived here. Other ethnic groups, including French, Croatians, and Italians settled in the area during various time periods. The Chinese started to locate here in earnest beginning in the 1930's. The area has been characterized by shops and commercial activities that tended to serve the Chinese community rather than tourists.

**3 YEE MEE LOO**  
690 N. Spring Street

This restaurant became popular with 1930's movie stars, perhaps because Spring Street was a frequent filming location. Its long-famous attraction was and is a sidewalk kitchen window through which the chefs and helpers can be seen practicing their art. Such windows are now popular in other parts of Chinatown.

**4 CHINA CITY SITE**  
Ord Street Parking Lot

China City was a tourist-oriented development that was begun as a result of the demolition of Old Chinatown. The north gate of China City was located in this present day parking lot; one can still see the remains of Shanghai Street shop fronts.

During its heyday in the 1940's, China City had narrow, twisting streets with nearly 50 colorful stores, booths, and restaurants. There was even a rickshaw stand in the courtyard. The House of Wang from the MGM picture *The Good Earth*, complete with authentic rural furnishings characteristic of a Chinese farmhouse, was on display. China City lasted until a fire in 1949 burned down many of its shops; it was never rebuilt.

**5 PHILIPPE THE ORIGINAL**  
1001 N. Alameda Street

Famed for French dip sandwiches, which the shop reportedly invented. Founded in 1903 downtown as a delicatessen and moved here in 1948. Historic Philippe combines old time unpretentious atmosphere with modest prices.

**6 WING ON TONG**  
701 N. Spring Street

A Chinese herb store whose origin dates back over 90 years to Old Chinatown. Herbalists can be seen inside preparing herb prescriptions in the traditional manner.

**7 700 Block of North Broadway**

North Broadway is the main street of Chinatown. Business activity is intense, especially during weekends when shoppers come from outlying areas. Fresh items, such as live poultry and fish,

are a common sight. A number of newly built shopping plazas have appeared within Chinatown, each with its distinctive features. Sidewalk peddlers have added to the atmosphere. New office buildings and financial institutions attest to the thriving economic health of the community.

**8 FOOD CENTER**  
727 N. Broadway

This new plaza is unique in that, when opened, every business in it had to be food related. Many of the shops in the Food Center specialize in regional cooking or in specific types of food. Visit Ten Ren Tea at the west end of the Center and see a traditional Chinese tea ceremony.

**9 WONG FAMILY BENEVOLENT ASSOC.**  
744 N. Broadway

One of over thirty family and district associations in Chinatown. Its purpose is to provide mutual assistance and a social outlet to Wong family members; Wong is the most common Chinese surname in Los Angeles.

**10 CATHAY BANK**  
777 N. Broadway

The first Chinese-American owned bank built in Chinatown. Almost all of its staff are bilingual or multilingual.

**11 LITTLE JOE'S**  
900 N. Broadway

One of the last remaining Italian restaurants in Chinatown and one of the oldest in Los Angeles, Little Joe's is a reminder of the large Italian population once centered here. It started in 1910 at 5th and Hewitt Streets and moved to its present location in 1926. Originally called Italian-American Grocery and Restaurant, the name was changed to Little Joe's during World War II.

**12 GOLDEN PALACE RESTAURANT**  
913 N. Broadway

Three beautiful, large Chinese scenes are depicted entirely in tiles on the front of this restaurant. This mural is reported to be one of the largest of its kind outside of China.

**13 CHINESE CONSOLIDATED BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION (CCBA)**  
925 N. Broadway

CCBA's membership consists of family associations, district associations, and fraternal societies. Historically, the main purposes of the CCBA have included (1) protecting the Chinese from persecution and anti-Chinese legislation, (2) giving aid to member groups and individuals, (3) arbitrating disputes, and (4) working for the community welfare. The CCBA acted as spokesperson for Chinatown for many years. Previously located in the Garnier Building, the CCBA moved to its present building in 1952.

**14 KONG CHOW TEMPLE**  
931 N. Broadway

This second-story temple is supported by and for the Chinese who come from the Sunwui and Hokshan district of Kwangtung Province. Visitors are requested to respect the temple as a house of worship.

**15 EAST-WEST FEDERAL BANK, f.s.b.**  
935 N. Broadway

This financial institution was the first federally chartered Chinese-American Savings and Loan Association in the United States. It has recently converted to a Federal Savings Bank. East-West currently has eight branch offices in Southern California.

**16 CAPITOL MILLING COMPANY**  
1231 N. Spring Street

The Eagle Mills was constructed in 1855 by merchant Abel Stearns. It was later sold and incorporated under its present name in 1883. Capitol was one of the earliest flour mills in the state, doing business from San Francisco to Mexico. In 1881, when the Los Angeles Telephone Company inaugurated its service, the mill was one of seven original subscribers. No longer in the retail business, the mill today deals only with the food industry. Ralph's Grocery Company and Foix Baking Company have been clients for over a century.



**17 MANDARIN PLAZA**  
970 N. Broadway

The overhead structure at the entrance depicts a traditional gold ingot. When opened in the early 1970's, this plaza represented the first significant commercial expansion of Chinatown since the 1940's. It consists of 35 restaurants, offices, and stores carrying antiques, arts and crafts, fast food, and services.

**18 & 19 ASSOCIATION ROW**  
N. Broadway and Bernard Street

This section of Chinatown, along North Broadway and around the corner on Bernard Street, is noted for its concentration of family and fraternal associations. The Bing Kong Tong, Lung Kong Tin Yee, Soo Yuen, Ying On, Lake Sun Kee Loo, Kow Kong Benevolent, and Gee How Oak Tien Associations are all located in the area. As the early immigrants often found themselves in a strange and hostile environment, associations provided shelter and fellowship for Chinese of common geographic or clan background.

**20 PHOENIX BAKERY, INC.**  
969 N. Broadway

The largest and oldest bakery in Chinatown. This prize-winning bakery has earned a citywide reputation for excellence in a non-Chinese confection, the fresh strawberry whipped cream cake. During busy weekends, the customer waiting line can be seen extending out to the sidewalk.

**21 CHINESE AMERICAN CITIZENS ALLIANCE (CACA), 415 Bamboo Lane**

The Los Angeles branch of this nationwide organization was established in the Garnier Building in 1912. CACA has fought continuously for the civil rights of Chinese-Americans and remains highly involved in political, community, and educational activities. The present headquarters was opened in 1956.

**22 NEW CHINATOWN—CENTRAL PLAZA**  
Gin Ling Way

On top of the east gate to New Chinatown is a plaque placed by Y.C. Hong in tribute to his mother and also honoring all mothers. Y.C. Hong was the first Chinese-American lawyer in Los Angeles admitted to the bar.

Facing the gate is a statue of Dr. Sun Yat Sen, founder of the Republic of China. He led the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 and is regarded as the "George Washington of China."

In the square beyond the statue are profile plaques of Peter Soo Hoo, Sr., and Herbert Lapham, who were the dynamic driving forces responsible for developing New Chinatown. Listed in Chinese are the numerous community leaders during those historic founding years.

New Chinatown opened in 1938 as the first planned urban Chinatown in the United States. It was originally geared toward the tourist trade and provided space for businesses displaced from Old Chinatown. New Chinatown stores presently offer a variety of gifts from souvenirs to antiques and jewelry. Restaurants vary in fare from fast food to the finest in Chinese cuisine.

During Chinese New Year and other festive occasions, an entertainment stage is set up in the plaza. A 100-foot long dragon and lion dancers snake through the streets to the sound of drums, cymbals, and firecrackers.

As you begin to walk down Gin Ling Way note the rooflines of the buildings on the right. Animals and fishes on the roofs, as on Hong Kong Low, are traditional talismans for protection of buildings. Look above the entrance on the corner building and note the large painting of a fiery dragon created by noted local watercolor artist Tyrus Wong.

**23 GENERAL LEE'S (Man Jen Low)**  
475 Gin Ling Way

Originally located in Old Chinatown, it is one of the earliest Chinese restaurants in Los Angeles. It has been continuously operated by the same family for over a century.

**24 WEST GATE**  
Hill Street

A bronze tablet commemorating the part played by Chinese in the "constructive progress" of California was placed on the west gate by Governor Frank Merriam.

**25 NEW CHINATOWN—WEST PLAZA**  
This section of New Chinatown was completed after World War II. All the buildings have living quarters rather than commercial uses on their second stories. With its groceries, bookstores, and newspaper office, this area has traditionally had more of a neighborhood ambience than Gin Ling Way.

**26 F. SEE ON COMPANY**  
507 Chungking Court

One of the oldest family-owned Asian art stores in Los Angeles. It first opened in Sacramento in 1872 and moved to Los Angeles in 1881. It is still being run by the Fong family.

**27 NEW KWONG TAI PRESS**  
940 Chungking Road

One of the oldest Chinese newspapers in Los Angeles. This basement printing office still contains the vast number of type trays required from the days when each Chinese character in the paper had to be set by hand. Although the newspaper is now published by more modern methods, handset type is still used here for wedding invitations and other fine printing.

**28 FRENCH HOSPITAL**  
531 W. College Street

One of the first hospitals in Los Angeles, it was originally built in 1868 to serve the French population in the area but now serves the whole community. Parts of the original walls still stand, covered over during remodeling. A statue of St. Joan of Arc stands in front. Note the plaques at the main entrance.

**29 CHINATOWN BRANCH, LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY, 536 W. College Street**

The only public library located on school grounds was expanded jointly by the city, school district, and community. The Friends of the Chinatown Library alone raised \$277,000 for the building. It includes materials in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Spanish and features a large Chinese-American collection in English. It serves the immediate neighborhood and borrowers throughout Southern California.

**30 CASTELAR SCHOOL**  
840 Yale Street

Castelar School is the second oldest continuously operating elementary school in the Los Angeles Unified School District, dating back to 1882. Many of its wooden buildings were torn down in 1975; the school was rebuilt to meet earthquake standards. It is the first school in the district with trilingual instruction (Chinese-English-Spanish).

**31 CHINESE CONFUCIUS TEMPLE**  
816 N. Yale Street

Supported by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and community donations, this temple provides facilities for children to learn Chinese culture and language.

**32 ALPINE RECREATION CENTER**

The Center provides athletic and arts programs in the only open space in Chinatown's residential area, which has a population of over 10,000.

**33 CHINESE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
825 N. Hill Street

This is one of several old churches serving Chinatown. It was organized in Old Chinatown in 1887 and moved to its present location in 1947.

**34 ASIAN TOWER**  
Hill and Ord Streets

Shops in this plaza are primarily run by Chinese-Vietnamese. The clock tower is a replica of a similar structure in Saigon.

**35 DARIO'S IMPORTED FOODS**  
410 Ord Street

Specializing in Italian food, Dario's has served the local community as well as downtown workers since 1925.

**36 CATHAY MANOR**  
600 N. Broadway

Developed by a community group with support from the City's Community Redevelopment Agency, this \$23 million structure is designed to house 270 senior citizens, a recreation center, and a community services center.

## **CREDITS**

**This brochure was prepared by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Inc., 1648 Redcliff Street, Los Angeles, CA 90026.**

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### **Brochure Committee:**

George Yee, Chairperson  
Doreen Chan, Munson Kwok, Paul Louie,  
Bill Mason, Eugene Moy, Chuck Yee

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Ed and Evy Cucchiarella  
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Johnson Yee  
David Fong Lee  
Gilbert Quon Lew  
Tom Moy

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